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# Lesson Plan

## *Buttons of the Civil War*

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### Grades

4, 5, 6

### Subjects

U.S. History, Visual Arts

### Time Allotted

60 minutes

### Setting

Classroom

### Group size

25 to 30 students

### Skills

Group discussion, research, cooperative groups

### Methods

Students working in cooperative groups will design and illustrate a button to represent their group.

### Materials

Posterboard, construction paper, scissors, glue, and markers, photos or pictures of Civil War buttons and uniforms

### Keywords

Artillery  
Cavalry  
Infantry  
Regiments  
Regulation

### Objectives

At the end of the activity, students will be able to:

- Compare buttons used by different Civil War regiments.
- Discuss the significance of buttons used on uniforms.
- Create and explain the significance of a button to represent their group.



### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Soldiers of both sides of the war regarded Civil War buttons as souvenirs and many times they were traded during a truce. Before soldiers left their homes, admirers, both male and female, asked for coat buttons from their departing heroes. Federal uniform buttons often contained the state seal of the Civil War regiment or an eagle with a letter on its chest revealing a soldier's branch of service. (For example: "C" for Cavalry; "I" for Infantry; "A" for Artillery) Occasionally, Federal generals would donate uniform buttons to be sold at "soldier fairs" where money was being raised to aid soldiers' families or for other philanthropic causes.

Confederate soldiers wore brass buttons with only the letter of their branch of service but some general service buttons were marked with the letters "CSA." At the end of the war some Confederate soldiers had coats with Yankee buttons, pewter buttons and even ones made from acorns. Confederates were forced to remove any buttons or other military insignias from their uniforms after the war until they could get civilian clothes. Today Civil War buttons are still highly regarded as collectors' items because of their wide diversity.

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- Interview An Infantryman and/or Creating a Civil War Soldier's Wish List
- Have students research and find other symbols that soldiers used to identify their regiments.
- Illustrate and write a description of the symbol.

### RESOURCES

"Buttons a Favorite for Collectors," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, May 1964.

### ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to look at the buttons on their clothing and the clothing of their classmates.
- Ask students to describe the purpose of buttons.
- Describe the use of buttons on the uniforms of the Civil War soldiers and the significance of the various designs.
- Show students pictures of Civil War uniforms and buttons.
- Divide the class into cooperative groups and ask them to decide on the kind of regiment their group will represent (ie. infantry, cavalry or artillery).
- Students will then design and illustrate a button that represents their group.
- Groups will then present their button to the whole class with an explanation of the significance of the design.
- Buttons will be glued on a posterboard.

**APPENDIX**  
**Drawings of the Civil War buttons**

